

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BERLIN 5718

E O 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GE
SUBJ: GDR SENDS CLEARER SIGNALS ON FUTURE CULTURAL POLICIES

BEGIN SUMMARY: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN GDR CULTURAL
POLITICS INDICATE THAT FOUR MONTHS AFTER THE EXPULSION
OF WOLF BIERMANN, THE SED IS FINALLY SENDING CLEARER
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SIGNALS ON FUTURE CULTURAL POLICIES. BOTH AT A MEETING
OF THE BERLIN BRANCH OF THE GDR WRITERS' ASSOCIATION
MARCH 31 AND IN A POLITBURO REPORT DELIVERED BY
HONECKER TO THE SED CENTRAL COMMITTEE ON MARCH 17,
A NEW GDR LINE EMERGED EMPHASIZING: 1) GREATER PRESSURE ON GDR
WRITERS TO PROMOTE SOCIALISM MORE ACTIVELY IN THEIR
WRITINGS WHILE STRENGTHENING THEIR TIES TO THE PARTY

AND THE WORKING CLASS, AND 2) CONTINUED TOLERATION OF DIVERSE FORMS OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION AND PORTRAYAL OF CONFLICT SITUATIONS IN GDR SOCIETY SO LONG AS THE WRITERS PROCEED M A SOCIALIST STANDPOINT. THE SED IS ENCOURAGING MORE ACTIVE LITERARY CRITICISM TO INTEGRATE GDR WRITERS MORE EFFECTIVELY THROUGH IMPROVED FEEDBACK. THE INFLUENCE OF GDR WRITERS WHO SIGNED THE BIERMANN PETITION IN NOVEMBER CONTINUES TO DIMINISH WITHIN THE GDR WRITERS' ASSOCIATION, BUT THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT THEY WILL BE PROHIBITED FROM PUBLISHING NEW WORKS IN THE GDR. THE BIERMANN SUPPORTERS ARE MAINTAINING A WAIT AND SEE ATTITUDE PENDING SED REACTION TO NEW WORKS BY JUREK BECKER AND GUNTHER KUNERT IN JUNE. WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE SED WILL ATTEMPT TO AVOID FURTHER CONFRONTATION WITH WELL-KNOWN WRITERS WHO SIGNED THE BIERMANN PETITION WHILE CONTINUING TO PRESSURE LESSER KNOWN. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER MONTHS OF INDECISION, THE SED NOW APPEARS DETERMINED NOT TO REACT TO THE BIERMANN EVENTS WITH A "SHORT TERM CAMPAIGN," AS POLITBURO MEMBER KONRAD NAUMANN PUT IT, BUT RATHER WITH A LONG TERM POLICY DESIGNED TO INTEGRATE GDR WRITERS MORE EFFECTIVELY INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF GDR SOCIETY AND TO PROVIDE THEM WITH MORE IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK THROUGH IMPROVED LITERARY CRITICISM. THE EARLY PHASE OF THE SED'S POST-BIERMANN REACTION, IN WHICH THE PETITION SIGNERS WERE LABELED AS "COUNTER REVOLUTIONARIES", APPEARS TO BE OVER, THOUGH THE WRITERS ARE STILL CRITICIZED FOR PASSING THE PETITION

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TO WESTERN NEWS AGENCIES. THE PARTY IS INSTEAD DEALING WITH ITS WRITERS MORE CAREFULLY, STRESSING THE ARTISTS RESPONSIBILITY TO SOCIALISM WHILE CONCEDING THE VALUE OF A WIDE RANGE OF EXPRESSION IN GDR LITERATURE. THE SED APPARENTLY DOES NOT WANT TO DESTROY A BLOSSOMING GDR LITERATURE JUST BEGINNING TO GAIN INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION, AND THUS MUST TREAD SOMEWHAT LIGHTLY PARTICULARLY SINCE MOST OF THE BEST KNOWN GDR WRITERS SIGNED THE BIERMANN PETITION.

2. THE SED'S CURRENT APPROACH TO THE BIERMANN PETITION SIGNERS CAME TO LIGHT AT THE LONG-AWAITED PLENARY MEETING OF THE 450 MEMBER EAST BERLIN WRITERS UNION MARCH 31. ELECTIONS FOR A NEW 22 MEMBER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOUND LESSER KNOWN BUT RELIABLE GDR WRITERS FILLING THE RANKS, WHILE BIERMANN PETITION SIGNER STEFAN HEYM MET THE SAME FATE AS OTHER BIERMANN SUPPORTERS SUCH AS JUREK BECKER, GUNTER DE BRUYN, SARAH KIRSCH AND ULRICH PLENZDORF WHO WERE REMOVED FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IN NOVEMBER. ALL OF THESE WRITERS HAVE RETAINED THEIR MEMBERSHIP IN

THE GDR WRITERS ASSOCIATION, HOWEVER, WHICH MEANS THEY
ARE FREE TO PUBLISH IN THE GDR.

3. IN AN INDICATION OF WHAT THE SED NOW EXPECTS FROM
GDR ARTISTS, THE EAST BERLIN WRITERS' ASSOCIATION,
UNDER ITS NEWLY ELECTED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, FORWARDED
AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PARTY LEADERSHIP GIVING A HIGHLY
ORTHODOX PRESENTATION OF THE ARTIST'S ROLE IN SOCIALISM.
IN ADDITION TO PAYING HOMAGE TO THE LEADING ROLE OF THE
SED IN CULTURAL POLICY, THE LETTER PRAISED SOCIALIST
REALISM AND, TOUCHING INDIRECTLY ON THE BIERMANN EVENTS,
CAME OUT AGAINST ALL ATTEMPTS TO EXPLIT DIFFERENCES OF
OPINION AMONG GDR WRITERS TO CREATE POLITICAL CONFRONTATION.
IT CLOSED WITH A CALL FOR GREATER COOPERATION WITH THE
SED IN THE NAME OF SOCILIST ART.

4. AS REPORTED IN EAST BERLIN DAILY BERLINER-ZEITUNG
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(BZ), SED POLITBURO MEMBER KONRAD NAUMANN SOUNDED SIMILAR
THEMES IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE EAST BERLIN WRITERS AND CALLED

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BOVE ALL FOR MORE "NEARNESS TO LIFE" AND "SOCIAL EXACTNESS" IN GDR LITERATURE. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, HE ARGUED FOR CONTINUED DIVERSITY AND ASSERTED THAT IT WAS PRECISELY THE WIDE RANGE OF FORMS IN GDR LITERATURE THAT LED THE PARTY TO STATE CLEARLY WHAT IT WOULD BE PLEASED TO SEE. NAUMANN APPEARED TO HERALD AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE FOR LITERARY CRITICS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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THE GDR TO GIVE GDR WRITERS MORE ACTIVE AND TIMELY FEEDBACK ON THEIR WORKS. A DEFENSIVE NOTE CREPT INTO HIS PRESENTATION WHEN HE DENIED THAT GDR CULTURAL POLICY WAS NOTHING MORE THAN A "SHORT-LIVED CAMPAIGN".

5. OTHER SPEECHES DELIVERED BY PARTYLINE WRITERS AT THE EAST BERLIN MEETING STRESSED THE NEED FOR GDR WRITERS TO GET OUT AMONG THE WORKERS. ONE PARTICULARLY INSPIRED PARTY PUNDIT ASSERTED THAT GDR WRITERS SHOULD NOT BE AFRAID TO GET THE MUD OF EAST BERLIN'S NEW NINTH DISTRICT ON THEIR SHOES, SINCE MUD ON THE FEET MAKES FOR A CLEAR HEAD. A SPEAKER FROM THE FREE GERMAN YOUTH (FDJ) URGED THAT THE WRITERS SHOULD NOT JUST DESCRIBE THEIR OWN PRIVIATE EXPERIENCE, BUT SHOULD GET OUT AND VISIT FDJ YOUTH BRIGADES ON A REGULAR BASIS.

6. WHILE GIVING THE LION'S SHARE OF ITS COVERAGE TO SUCH ORTHODOX COMMENTS, BZ NOTED BRIEFLY THAT KLAUS SCHLESINGER AND STEFAN HEYN, BOTH BIERMANN PETITION SIGNERS, HAD ALSO SPOKEN AT THE MEETING. IT REPORTED THAT HEYM HAD ARGUED FOR VOICING AND DISCUSSING DIFFERENCES OF OPINION OPENLY. NEUES DEUTSCHLAND'S STIMULATING EXCHANGE OF VIEWS INDICATES THAT DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WERE EXPRESSED AT THE MEETING.

7. AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE EAST BERLIN WRITERS ASSOCIATION MEETING, SECTIONS ON GDR CULTURAL POLICY IN A POLITBURO REPORT DELIVERED BY HONECKER TO THE SED

CENTRAL COMMITTEE ON MARCH 17 FALL INTO CLEARER PERSPECTIVE. HONECKER TOOK THE SAME APPROACH OF STRONG WORDS ON THE ARTISTS ROLE "FOR SOCIALISM" MIXED WITH CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR VARIETY IN GDR LITERATURE. HONECKER WARNED THAT THE GDR WOULD COUNTER ANY ATTEMPTS TO SPREAD HOSTILE IDEOLOGIES UNDER THE "BANNER OF CULTURE" AND REMARKED THAT WRITERS WHO DWELT ONLY ON THEMES OF MARGINAL IMPORTANCE TO GDR SOCIETY RISKED WASTING THEIR TALENTS. CONFIDENTIAL

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LIKE NAUMANN, HONECKER CALLED UPON GDR LITERARY CRITICS TO BE MORE ACTIVE IN JUDGING WORKS ON ART ACCORDING TO THEIR IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL CONTENT. HE ALSO CALLED FOR A STEPPED-UP INTEGRATION OF GDR WRITERS AND ARTISTS INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF GDR SOCIETY BY PROPOSING THAT PARTY ORGANIZATIONS HELP THE ARTISTS TO ATTAIN THE CORRECT IDEOLOGICAL STANDPOINT. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE ARTISTS SHOULD BE BROUGHT INTO GREATER CONTACT WITH WORKERS AS WELL AS WITH PARTY, STATE AND ECONOMIC FUNCTIONARIES. AT THE SAME TIME, HONECKER CALLED FOR A "TRUSTFUL AND CREATIVE ATMOSPHERE" BETWEEN THE SED AND GDR ARTISTS AND SUPPORTED THE PORTRAYAL OF CONFLICT IN GDR LITERATURE. FOR HONECKER, THE "RICH POSSIBILITIES FOR CREATION" AND THE "VARIETY IN FORMS OF EXPRESSION" WOULD BE HELPED RATHER THAN HINDERED BY STRENGTHENING SOCIALIST CONTENT IN THE ARTS.

8. COMMENT: THERE ARE INCREASING SIGNS THAT THE SED RECOGNIZES THAT THE BIERMANN SUPPORTERS DO NOT CONSTITUTE A BROADLY BASED OPPOSITION AND THAT IT HOPES TO INTEREST THEM MORE EFFECTIVELY THROUGH IMPROVED FEEDBACK. IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ON GDR CULTURAL POLICIES, DR. HEINZ KOSIN OF GDR INSTITUTE IPW STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVED CRITICISM IN THE SED'S APPROACH TO GDR WRITERS. KOSIN CRITICIZED PAST OFFICIAL REACTION TO GDR LITERATURE AS TOO RITUALISTIC AND SHALLOW, A STATE OF AFFAIRS THAT HAD LEFT GDR WRITERS IN LIMBO NOT KNOWING WHERE THEY HAD GONE TOO FAR AND WHY. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IN THE BIERMANN AFFAIR, THE GDR HAD NOT FACED THE KIND OF ORGANIZED OPPOSITION THAT HAS DEVELOPED IN POLAND OR CZECHOSLOVAKIA. THUS, AFTER AN INITIAL STRONG REACTION, THE GDR WOULD APPROACH ITS WRITERS MORE CAREFULLY, SEEKING TO INTEGRATE THEM RATHER THAN FORCING THEM INTO OPPOSITION. RECENT ARTICLES IN THE GDR WRITERS ASSOCIATION JOURNAL NEUE DEUTSCHE LITERATUR AND GDR CULTURAL WEEKLY SONNTAG HAVE CALLED FOR AN IMPROVED

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AND MORE DETAILED LITERARY CRITICISM IN THE GDR,
INDICATING THAT THE SED'S CAMPAIGN ON THIS ISSUE IS IN
FULL SWING.

9. THERE HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS SIGNS OF GROWING ACCOMMODATION
ON THE GDR CULTURAL SCENE IN RECENT WEEKS. PREVIOUS WORKS

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AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION USBERLIN UNN

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BY BIERMAN PETITION SIGNERS HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE
GDR ALONG WITH A NOVEL BY GUNTER KUNERT PUBLISHED FIVE
YEARS AGO IN THE FRG BUT NEVER IN THE GDR. PETITION
SIGNER CHRISTA WOLF'S LATEST NOVEL HAS COME IN FOR

LAVISH PRAISE BY PARTY LINE WRITER HERMANN KANT, ONE OF THOSE WHO HAD ATTACKED THE BIERMANN SUPPORTERS LAST NOVEMBER. AT THE LEIPZIG BOOK FAIR IN MARCH, THE FACT
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THAT NUMEROUS BOOKS BY BIERMANN PETITION SIGNERS WERE ON DISPLAY REINFORCED THE IMPRESSION OF GROWING ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN THE SED AND THE WRITERS.

10. BIERMANN SUPPORTERS WITH WHOM THE EMBASSY HAS CONTACT CONTINUE TO FEEL ISOLATED AND UNCERTAIN, HOWEVER, AND MOST HAVE ADOPTED A WAIT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE. THE WRITERS WHO BACKED BIERMANN APPEAR TO BE FEELING MORE PRESSURE FROM THEIR MORE ORTHODOX PEERS THAN FROM THE UPPER ECHELONS OF THE SED, AND AN ATMOSPHERE OF RECRIMINATION AND ESTRANGEMENT EXISTS IN THE GDR LITERARY COMMUNITY. SOME PETITION SIGNERS ADMIT THAT THE PRESSURE ON GDR WRITERS WAS LESS SEVERE THAN THAT ON BIERMANN SUPPORTERS IN OTHER AREAS, AND ATTRIBUTE THIS TO THE POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF THE POLITBURO MEMBER CHARGED WITH SCIENCE AND LITERATURE, KURT HAGER, WHOM THEY CONTRAST FAVORABLY WITH WERNER LAMBERZ, HELD PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE BY MANY FOR THE HEAVY HANDED CRACKDOWN IN THE GDR FILM, TELEVISION AND RADIO SECTOR.

11. MANY GDR WRITERS ARE WITHHOLDING THEIR PROGNOSIS ON THE FUTURE COURSE OF GDR CULTURAL POLICIES UNTIL THE FIRST WORKS BY PROMINENT WRITERS COMPLETED AFTER THE BIERMANN AFFAIR GO TO THE SED AUTHORITIES FOR APPROVAL. IT APPEARS THAT THE FIRST TEST CASES WILL COME IN MAY OR JUNE, WHEN BOTH GUNTER KUNERT AND JUREK BECKER COME FORWARD WITH NEW WORKS. BOTH WRITERS REACTED TO THE BIERMANN CLAMP DOWN BY THROWING THEMSELVES INTO THEIR WORK, THOUGH KUNERT BEGAN ONLY AFTER A THREE MONTH PAUSE IN WHICH HE WAS PSYCHOLOGICALLY INCAPABLE OF WRITING. KUNERT HAS TOLD EMBOFF THAT HIS NEXT BOOK WILL BE A JOURNAL FROM HIS FOUR MONTH VISIT TO ENGLAND IN 1976. HE EXPECTS THE BOOK MAY HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THE GDR CENSORS, SINCE HE SPENT MUCH TIME IN ENGLAND REFLECTING ON THE GDR. JUREK BECKER HAS REFUSED TO DIVULGE THE THEME OF HIS LATEST WORK, BUT HAS INDICATED
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THAT IF IT IS REFUSED BY THE CENSORS, HE MAY BE THE NEXT TO LEAVE THE GDR. FROM CONVERSATION WITH BECKER, IT APPEARS THAT HIS BOOK MAY DEAL WITH A SUBJECT THE SED

WILL HAVE A HARD TIME ACCEPTING: ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE
GDR TIED IN WITH THE PARTY'S REACTION TO THE BIERMANN
PETITION SIGNERS, MANY OF WHOM ARE JEWISH.

12. WE ANTICIPATE THAT THE SED WILL CONTINUE ITS NUANCED
AND CAREFUL APPROACH TOWARD GDR WRITERS WHO
SIGNED THE BIERMANN PETITION AND THAT FOR THE GDR'S
MORE ESTABLISHED WRITERS, AN ATMOSPHERE OF ACCOMMODATION
WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP. THE SED WILL MOST LIKELY
ATTEMPT TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WHEN WRITERS
LIKE KUNERT AND BECKER BEGIN PRESENTING THEIR
WORKS FOR PUBLICATION. IF THE NEW MANUSCRIPTS ARE
UNACCEPTABLE FROM THE SED POINT OF VIEW, THE NEW EMPHASIS
ON CRITICISM AND FEEDBACK COULD LEAD THE PARTY TO
ENGAGE THE AUTHORS IN A DISCUSSION OF THEIR WORKS,
INDICATING WHICH SECTIONS ARE PROBLEMATIC
AND WHY, RATHER THAN REJECTING THEM OUT OF HAND
WITH NO EXPLANATION AS HAS OCCURRED IN THE PAST.

13. WHILE PRESSURE ON WELL-ESTABLISHED GDR WRITERS
APPEARS TO BE EASING, HOWEVER, EIGHT LESSER KNOWN
BIERMANN SUPPORTERS IN JENA REMAIN UNDER ARREST AND
SEVERAL STUDENTS HAVE BEEN EXPELLED FROM JENA UNIVERSITY
IN RECENT WEEKS FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES LAST NOVEMBER.
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